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ABSTRACT

To examine what motivates mature people to begin a full-time educational program, a study was made of students at the Institute of Continuing Education (Londonderry, Northern Ireland), which runs a one-year, full-time, academically intense program in liberal studies for mature students with or without formal educational qualifications. The study was conducted along the lines of a 1950s study by J. Blumler of students at Ruskin College (Oxford, England) and had similar findings. Interviews of twenty students were conducted, from which a questionnaire was developed which was administered to forty-one students. The Londonderry study detected three relatively independent components among the many reasons cited for application to the program: (1) a vocational or instrumental component, expressed as a desire for a formal qualification and university entrance; (2) a social relevence component, expressed as a desire for a job which is both satisfying and serves others; and (3) an intellectual/cultural component, expressed as a desire to complete education, to do some serious study, and to regain or build self-confidence. (Tables of data, notes, and references are included.) (LMS)

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STUDYING THE ADULT LEARNER IN A FORMAL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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STUDYING THE ADULT LEARNER IN A FORMAL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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1. BACKGROUND

This paper reports on the current state of a Research Programme being undertaken at the Institute of Continuing Education. The Institute runs a one-year, full-time, academically intense course in liberal studies for mature students, with or without formal educational qualifications, over the age of 23. The course was set up in 1973, after the establishment of the Institute on the premises of the old Magee College.

Research Brief

I have been employed to carry out a study of the Foundation Course, as it is called, and specifically,

(1) to measure student pre-course expectations, attitudes and motivation;

(2) to monitor student perception of tasks and assignments and delineate the major kinds of learning difficulties;

(3) to devise methods of measuring student performance appropriate to the aims of the course;

(4) to analyse the effectiveness of the student group as a learning resource for individual students.

From the beginning (December 1977), I have been less concerned with deciding which of these aims be accorded priority, less concerned with deciding whether the programme should be evaluative or processual in its predominant colour[1], and more concerned with describing and analysing the course milieu in all its uniqueness with an eye to the emergence of significant, generalisable themes.

Consequently, my initial move was to learn all I could about the functioning of the course, the background to its establishment, the philosophy which guides it, and the educational milieu within which it operates.

The Influence of Residential Adult Education

The work of the Institute, particularly as that is expressed in the Foundation Course (henceforth, FC) must be seen against the development of

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Copies of this paper may be obtained from the author. Send to The Institute of Continuing Education, Magee University College, Derry, Northern, Ireland.

residential Adult Education in Britain since the beginning of the century. This particular strain of a complex species was spawned by the campaign to open up the universities to all eligible adults regardless of class or religious background, a campaign which led to the creation of University Extension in the late 1800s, and the founding of the Worker's Educational Association in 1903.

First to be established, and still by far the most prestigious, was Ruskin College, Oxford. Its founder, Walter Vrooman, a wealthy American, hoped it would spearhead the beginning of a nationwide movement in residential AE. Ruskin would give workers, formerly denied it, the chance to go to Oxford, and, there, to derive the full range of academic benefits, which had been the traditional preserve of the middle classes. But they should not yield to the middle-class myth of competition leading to concrete, and, yet, culturallly spurious, material advance. Instead "...it is hoped that many will go back to their trades and that the general tendency of the movement will be to implant in the working class of England a leaven of men who will bring to their daily work wider minds and artistic perception".[2]

Nine other colleges were set up in different parts of the country of which seven still flourish, including Ruskin. A new college has opened just recently in the North of England.

Their status within and influence on the mainstream Adult Education may be determined if we bear in mind the following: firstly, they are insignificant numerically - in any one year the numbers attending all nine colleges (this includes the Institute in Derry) does not exceed 1,000.

Secondly, and related to the first point, they are residential. In the past, certainly, this aspect of the lifestyle has been more characteristic of seminaries than of normal colleges of further education. The value of residence has been espoused by all. It has been described by one warden as "detachment, liberation, and concentration".[3] It is the idea that people are freed from their normal environment to study in peace and to share their educational experience with others of similar type. They are surrounded by a learning environment. They can stand back and consider their lives impartially.

Thirdly, and, perhaps, crucially, despite their constitutional, structural, and educational uniqueness they appear to share with the main stream of full-time and part-time adult education an emphasis by students on the course's vocational or instrumental possibilities. It is this latter feature of the colleges' pedagogic influence which provides us with the clue to understanding their total significance to the student, and, an indication of his or her initial perception and eventual social and occupational choice.

Curriculum Content and Form

Course in the colleges last for one or two years, though lately the move has been to the longer, examinable course, with a corresponding downgrading of the one-year variant. The FC is typical of the residential model

curriculum; the subjects studied consist of language and literature, social studies and history. Teaching is by lecture and tutorial. Weekly essays are continuously assessed and go to form part of the total assessment, along with a project (undertaken by the student in an area of particular interest to him or her) and a final, university-validated exam.*

The Student Intake

To date 131 people including this year's 41, have taken the full-time course, approximately a further 70 taking the part-time, two year version. Due to grant restrictions only 20 students have taken the course in any one year. This year the number was permitted to rise to 40 and will probably remain at this level for the next few years. On average, close to 70% go on to university, almost all to the New University in Coleraine.

2. RESEARCH ORIENTATION

Initially, I aimed to understand the interrelationship of student expectation and course experience, with a view to building up, what might be termed loosely, a social-psychological picture of the mature student. Research of the survey and/or experimental nature in this area is extremely scarce. Despite the existence of British journals devoted to the subject[4] the bulk of empirical investigations lies buried and unpublished in theses. Kelly's bibliography has the appearance of being more comprehensive. In fact, however, Charnley's collection of annotated theses is far more useful for the beginner.[5]

One of the few serious pieces of empirical work to emerge in this field over the last 20 years must surely be J. Blumler's monumental study of Ruskin students in the '50s. His findings figured prominently in the submissions made by the residential colleges to the Robbins' Committee on higher education in the United Kingdom (1961-1963). Carried out over a six year period (1952-58) when he was a tutor at Ruskin, it was, in Blumler's words, "an exploratory study....not designed to test specific hypotheses"[6] but to enquire into the kinds of change which the experience of a long-term residential education might have on the social, occupational and personal experience of its present and former students. He interviewed over 200 present and past students. Over 600 in all returned questionnaires. Information was collected at three points. Students were given a questionnaire to complete at entry and on leaving. Analysis of the data thus obtained formed the basis of a questionnaire sent out to former students, in 1957, the main year of the study. Subsequently, both current and past students were individually interviewed by the author.

Impressed by the scope and richness of the study I determined to begin the Institute's programme along similar lines. This was not intended to prescribe the study's methodology or final result, but to serve as a useful practical means by which an initial understanding of the FC and its social and pedagogic influence could be effected.

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* The Institute is structurally part of the New University Of Ulster, based in Coleraine some 30 miles away, and constitutes one of its five 'schools'.

Two Surveys of Mature Students

In May, 1978, I undertook to interview, individually, the 20 students then currently participating in the course using a number of questions put by Blumler to his sample, supplemented by others pertaining directly to the students' experience of the course, which hadn't been asked by him. Almost all of these questions were 'open'. The findings thus obtained went into the creation of a new 'closed' questionnaire administered to all 41 of this year's intake.

3. WHY DO STUDENTS DO THE COURSE?

Blumler had begun his investigations out of a curiosity to know in what ways 'second-chance' (residential) education affected the future lives of students. Through its close contact with the British Trade Union movement Ruskin is often seen as an institution which takes factory workers and educates them to become better trade unionists. It has been accused of setting in motion the escalator of social mobility which takes potential trade union leaders away from the movement and catapults them into the competitive striving for individual aggrandisement. How widespread is this reality? In what way is education as such the stoker of individual ambition? More particularly, in what way does second-chance, full-time education fuel the individual ambitions of adult workers to thwart a declared aim of the founders of Ruskin:

> "Our main work is to gather in... windbags, to prick them, letting the air escape and filling them with substance. We intend to convert these windbags into sandbags....We shall take men who have been condemning our institutions and will teach them how, instead to transform them".[7]

In Blumler's as in this study the results are a good deal more ambiguous and complex than the opposing schools would have them. Take occupational mobility for example. The following table depicts the number of those in certain occupational categories on admission (a sample of those admitted yearly since 1945) who had vacated those categories by 1957 (one, two or more years after leaving).

Table 1 Occupational Categories of Ruskin students on entry and in 1957

	When Admitted		In 1957	
	No.	%	No.	%
Unskilled/semi-skilled	29	16	3	2
Skilled Manual	53	29	9	5
Routine Clerical	62	34	14	8
High Status	33	18	143	79
Not Employed	3	2	11	6
	180	100	180	100

Table 1 (Continued)

Types of Occupational Mobility	%
Low status (Manual and Clerical) to high status	65
Upward mobility within low status	2
Upward mobility within high status	15
Immobiles (Low and High Status)	17
	(n = 166)

The largest group of mobile students were employed in various professional and semi-professional capacities (36%), mainly as school-teachers and social workers. 21% were employed as officers in the Labour Movement. A further 25% occupied positions of managerial responsibility in public and private enterprise. To quote the author: "In the post-war period upward occupational mobility has been the rule, and permanent occupational immobility the exception among former students".[8]

Is residential education responsible for the arousal of ambition? Blumler questioned his sample from a number of angles. He classified responses under three broad categories:

(1) vocational: dissatisfaction with previous employment;

(2) organisational: mainly, a student's concern to prepare himself to play a more effective part in the Labour Movement; and,

(3) intellectual/cultural: enjoyment of a subject, a concern to overcome certain intellectual weaknesses.[9]

Main findings emerging from interviews with 79 entrants showed, firstly, that most had been influenced by a combination of motives, and, secondly, the vocational element was strongest, but was rarely mentioned by itself.

In the Derry sample students were asked to indicate for each of 15 statements whether it was "very important"; "somewhat important" or "hardly mattered" as a reason for doing the course. They were also asked to rank 3 of the 15, "1", "2" and "3" in order of overall importance. I isolated three groups of statements in terms of their importance to entrants:

Group 1 - statements considered "very important" by 50% or more of the sample (32 of the 41 had returned questionnaires by the time the computer analysis was carried out).

Item

7. I wanted to obtain a formal qualification (63%)

1. I felt that my education was incomplete (59%)

14. I had a specific course in mind which the course would help me to get (56%)

2. I wanted to go to university (50%)

Another perspective on this is to consider the percentage of those who did not endorse the statement in question as one of their three choices. In the above case between 59% and 67% of the group did not give any of the statements a '1', '2' or'3' ranking. The second group of statements (see below) did not receive an endorsement by between 78% and 88% of the sample. Finally, came a third group of apparently irrelevant statements which were not endorsed by between 88% and 97% of the group. For example, there were two statements which were not chosen by anybody as first or second, in order of importance: "It was preferable to doing A-levels" and "I had always been interested in reading". In fact, only one of the group chose the latter as one of his/her three choices.

Group 2 - statements considered "very important" by between 30% and 40% of the sample.

9. I wanted to prove something to myself (41%)

10. I was looking for a new way of life (34%)

5. I wanted to do some serious study (34%)

6. I had a liking for a particular subject (31%)

15. I was curious to find out what ability I had in the academic field (31%)

8. I wanted to get back my confidence (28%)

Group 3 - statements of reasons which "hardly mattered" to 50% of more of the sample.

- I wanted to change my job (if employed at the time) (50%)

- I felt the course would help me get a job (if unemployed at the time) (47%)

Since doing the course is clearly linked to a change of job the lack of endorsement for reasons related to this needs to be explained. This is done below when we compare our own findings with those of Blumler.

Finally, it is interesting to note that only 6% of the sample thought that incompleteness of education (Item 1) "hardly mattered". The statements which come closest to this are one concerned with obtaining a formal qualification, which "hardly mattered" to 17%, and "I wanted to do some serious study", which "hardly mattered" to 19%.

4. THE COMPONENTS OF AMBITION

In apparent contrast to Blumler's findings a clear 'vocational' component does not emerge. On the contrary, job change is ranked low in the order of priorities. Yet this cannot be the case. Over 1/3 of this year's intake were unemployed at the time of entry. Almost all of the remainder have given up their old job and, if last year's student response is to be trusted, will not return to it unless circumstances dictate otherwise. Two explanations for this apparent divergence are to hand. Firstly, the fact of job change is so all-pervasive in student aspiration that it is taken for granted. Secondly, and allied to this point, the foundation course is not seen as the only means of escaping an unsatisfactory situation. In any case the uniquely high endorsement given to statements 1 and 7 compel us to accept the major importance of a 'vocational' or 'instrumental' component. Linking these with the strongly expressed desire to reach university and the picture emerges of a group for whom formal education is a declared instrument for realizing aims and aspirations. We might assume that under the weight of instrumental considerations reasons for doing the course which were more subject- or academically-oriented - Blumler's 'Intellectual/Cultural' component - would be weak. This appears to be the case. Consider the comparatively low endorsement given to statements 5 and 6. The latter "hardly mattered" to a further 1/3rd.

Blumler distinguishes between the vocational component which has a man despising the lack of satisfaction in his old job, and the 'organizational' factor which has him looking forward to the meaningfulness and social relevance of the new. Is such a component present in the thoughts and aspirations of Derry students?

For Ruskin students commitment to the Labour Movement serves to harness to vocational purpose the desire for an education which will make sense of their lives. Derry students express the same deep desire to uncover a way of life which makes sense. But the means by which this can be achieved is less well understood and, generally, more diffuse, even 'missionary', in quality. Firstly, let us consider the evidence for this species of desire.

Both Ruskin and Derry students were asked: "What are the three qualities you would most desire from your job?". They were provided with a list of 12 'qualities' and asked to rank them '1', '2' and '3' in order of preference. Comparative results are presented in Table 2.

Table 4

	Blumler endorsement* (n= 194)	FC 1977/78 (n= 18)	FC 1978/79 (n= 32)
	%	%	%
1. Where I would be a leader	5	-	2
2. Where I could be in charge of others	1	2	1
3. A very interesting job	20	22	22
4. Where I was highly paid	4	6	7
5. Where I was part of a team	6	11	8
6. Where I could help others	20	20	23
7. Where I was my own boss	2	6	9
8. Where I could make a name for myself	2	-	3
9. Where I was highly respected	5	2	1
10. A job I was absolutely sure of keeping	1	4	2
11. Where I could express my feelings, ideas, etc.	29	20	23
12. Where I could work more or less on my own	7	7	11
	100	100	100

* Chosen as either '1', '2' or '3'. If you think of the three choices together as a single choice then the above figures mean, for example, that 5% (of the choices) went to item 1, 1% to item 2, and so forth

There can be no doubt about which 3 factors emerge over all the others as defining the kind of milieu within which the student wishes to work:

- interesting job;
- where I could help others,
- where I could express my feelings

The similarity between the Irish and British responses is impressive. The question which naturally arises here is to what extent these stand as the qualities most desired by anybody in any kind of job, and, thus, to what extent they are redundant even misleading. Unfortunately, the very man who should have been in a position to clear up this matter has only helped to fudge it a bit more.

Blumler took the question from a survey of Robert Centers carried out in the US in 1945.[10] The latter's findings are the only ones to hand which permit comparison with our own and Blumler's. I had the impression from

from Blumler that he had used the original question. Consulting the source, however, I discovered that he had changed the wording in a way which might make comparisons not the straightforward task they otherwise would have been. Centers asked: "If you had a choice of one of these kinds of jobs which one would you choose?". In fact, the subject was given three choices not one, but he or she would not have known this to begin with. Faced with the single choice of a job, as opposed to three "qualities" of that job respondents could well have been dealing with a different question from that which Blumler posed.[11] This might explain divergence in the findings. Moreover, Centers listed only 10 job types, Blumler added "where I was part of a team" and "where I was my own boss". Unlike the original list where endorsement of any single item did not preclude endorsement of any other, on the Blumler list this is not so. Endorsement of item 5 should preclude endorsement of item 12. Items 7 and 12 seem to me to mean the same thing.

Centers administered his schedule to 1,100 American workers over a two week period immediately prior to the Japanese surrender, in 1945. Sampling was carried out on a quota basis and threw up four distinct groups: Urban and Rural Working and Middle class. Definitions of occupational and income classifications on which these particular distinctions were made appear legitimate.

However, whereas in the earlier part of the book statistical comparisons occur between groups previously defined before sampling was initiated, in later parts the composition of comparison groups is rearranged. Table 3 below which is Centers' Table 66 presents figures for MC and WC workers.

The MC group contains not only all those defined as being MC for sampling purposes but others who, while WC by sampling considerations, 'identify' with the MC.[12] The same is true of the WC group. This kind of shuffling leads to a reduction in the overall number of MC subjects by about 10%, and an increase in the WC portion by about 2%. Centers does not state in the text why this was a more promising or even valid form of comparison than that between groups originally defined as middle and working class on the basis of income and occupational considerations.

Table 3

ENDORSEMENT OF JOB TYPES

	Urban		Urban	
	Middle Class (n=338) %	Working Class (n=381) %	Middle Class (n=69) %	Working Class (n=108) %
1. Leader	5*	2	4	1
2. Boss	2	3	4	6
3. Interesting Job	14	13	12	11
4. Highly paid	7	8	3	6
(5. Part of a team)				
6. Help others	15	14	15	17
(7. Own Boss)				
8. Make a name	3	3	-	3
9. Highly respected	7	5	4	6
10. Sure of keeping	9	18	14	15
11. Self-expression	20	15	17	11
12. Work on my own	17	18	25	24
	100	100	100	100

* The original percentages have been divided by 3 and rounded to the nearest integer to make comparisons valid. This is in line with the idea of taking all 3 choices as a single choice.

Writing of his findings Blumler gives the impression that the English and American samples responded differently to the question: "Ruskin students concentrated their responses upon self-expression, an interesting job and service to others more exclusively than did either of the American groups".[13] Apart from differences on items 10 and 12 this clear divergence does not emerge. We could legitimately refer the response to item 10 to the fact that a World War was about to end, and that the issue of security was much more to the fore in the minds of workers than would have been the case during a period of peace. With regard to item 12 on the other hand it must be remembered that Blumler used <u>two</u> items to cover the one 'quality' and hence may well have dispersed responses over both. This was not the case in the Centers' survey.

We are compelled, therefore, to conclude that, on the basis of the only evidence available, there are no good grounds for believing that mature, second-

chance students differ from the general population of workers in the desire for more meaningful, socially relevant occupations. Nevertheless, we can point to these qualities as reflections of what mature students have found lacking in their previous jobs. Nor should we ignore the emphasis on helping others as a cogent, rallying reason why students have sought out the opportunity for 'completing' their education.

How are these aspirations harnessed? We turn now to evidence for the second point: that because of their background and the history of the relationship of Ruskin with the Labour Movement Ruskin students direct job aspirations towards Trade Union occupations, whereas a similar, convenient focus has been lacking for the Derry sample.

Blumler's groups were asked to list 3 jobs they would like to take up on leaving. Over 15 occupational types were produced in this way. When I put the same question to the pilot sample of 18 most could only come up with a single title, and, in almost all cases, preferences revolved around three choices:

- teaching/lecturing;
- social work;
- trade union and community work

So that the results might be more comparable I presented this year's sample of 41 with a list of 12 titles derived from the Blumler list. Students were asked to select 3 in order of preference. One third of those responding selected "social work/community work or youth work". This received twice as many first preferences as any of the others. Most of the titles received 4 or less combined first and second preferences. There were 5 which received 8 or more. These were, besides social work,

- adult education (job unspecified);
- writing/journalism;
- school teaching;
- university teaching and research

Jobs which received low or negligible ranking were: trade unionism; politics; civil service; private industry/management; a profession (examples given); craftsman; 'old job'.

Yet, despite the high acknowledgement of a 'socially ideal' job few of those intending to go on to university (almost all of the class) are electing to pursue courses directly related to their job choices. For example, the Institute runs a social work course lasting two years. Only one or two of the sample were interested in this alternative before coming to the course. A similar number are still interested.

It seems likely, however, that as in the case of desirable job 'qualities' so too do students approach the 'choice' of jobs with a kind of wish fulfilment, a socially desirable and understandably 'human' response peg on which

to hang ambiguous and incohate ideas of the future. From preliminary interviews with this year's intake students are clearly instrumental in their reasons for doing the course: entry to university. The same goal-seeking is not evident when asked why they wish to go to university. For many it is presently an end in itself.

So far then we are in agreement with Blumler that there are two components in the pre-course motivation which brings students to the foundation course. Blumler also found a third; which he labelled "intellectual/cultural". Group 2 of statements listed above (page 6) seems to tap this dimension. However, it is clear that this appears secondary in the order of priorities. It is not a factor which on its own drives many of the students from a dissatisfying environment. While only 6% of the sample alleged to have no instrumental reasons for doing the course, almost 20% thought that the need to do serious study "hardly mattered" to them. Similar percentages attach to the other statements in Group 2.

On the other hand there may be reasons for suspecting that intellectual considerations are very important though hidden behind other feelings or else ignored by the student because they cause discomfort. This would be especially true of 'working class' students among whom a habit of distrust towards things intellectual is encouraged by their 'class'. The course could then be seen as the opportunity to awaken intellectual interests for some, while helping others to 'come out' and admit that their interests lay along these lines after all. Does this, in fact, happen?

4. WHAT DOES THE COURSE DO FOR STUDENTS?

The question which now arises is to what extent the course can or should weaken the instrumental/vocational component and strengthen the other two. More importantly, to what extent does the course enhance the intellectual/cultural dimension by, firstly, bringing out a student's sense of satisfaction with intellectual endeavour, and, secondly, beginning his interest in a subject area? There are two ways in which we can look at this issue: consider the impact of the course on contemporary students and examine the after-course choices of former students.

In what follows, it is important to bear in mind that the Ruskin course normally lasts two years; the FC lasts only one.

Blumler describes a growing awareness of faculties which students could exercise in more responsible employment. In depth interviews with 64 2nd year students revealed three main effects of the course on future plans:-

1. the drive for university admission;

2. the encouragement to look for work with academic content, e.g. teaching, research, preparing reports, etc.; and

3. the restructuring of estimated vocational possibilities.

Blumler says: "The interviews with two years of leaving students show that the Ruskin experience contributes powerfully to the interest of many students in taking a degree course".[14] Of 153 leaving students providing relevant information 2/3 had sought admission to some full-time course. 3/4 of these were university applicants: 49% of the lot. To understand the significance of these figures it must be understood that the Ruskin course is self-contained, and not linked to the University of Oxford for its 'completion', as it were. Whereas, all the signs are that the Magee course is university oriented and makes little sense unless some form of further tertiary education is contemplated. By the end of the course, while 31% of the Ruskin students interviewed claimed that the course had awoken an interest in university there still remained a sizeable 45% for whom university did not figure in their plans. Against this must be put the fact that three months after entry 27 of the 32 Derry students had applied or were applying for university entrance.

Therefore, in our case we cannot conclude with Blumler that "the most important contribution of the course to the drive for university places is an academic one".[15] We will have to look elsewhere if we wished to be assured that the benefits of the course are not merely instrumental.

To date there is no evidence that either the Ruskin or Derry courses awaken an interest in a specific subject area. Rather does it seem to be the case that they strengthen the ancillary skills by which such an interest - if it exists - can be advanced. More importantly, they help greatly in removing the feelings of inferiority which have previously attached themselves to the exercise of those skills. The Ruskin interviews highlighted the importance of the experience of inferiority for many entrants. One student said:

> "The decisive factor was my ignorance. I'd been active in the Labour Movement for a long time, and realized that if I was to be fit to play a more responsible role I would need to be much better educated than I was. Also I often felt a desire to get into what I call the 'other room'. This is the world inhabited by those who seem to know what they're talking about."[16]

Asked what they thought was the "chief thing" that the course would have taught them by the end of the year the Derry sample responded as follows:

Table 4

	1st choice	2nd choice
A subject	2	1
How to think properly	7	7
How to study properly	13	10
How to write well	2	7
Self-confidence	8	7

To understand more comprehensively the course's anatomy of progress as far as the intellectual/cultural component is concerned we must consider two further features of former students: leisure time activities and responsibility in occupation. Here we have data for Ruskin students only, though it is only a matter of time before we are similarly informed about our own students.

The restructuring of estimated vocational possibilities means a growing realism about the kinds of opportunities which would be available on completion of the course. This had its main effect in persuading a substantial minority that jobs would not be found for them in the Labour Movement. At the same time there is a growing interest in work with an academic content. Here is how Blumler characterised this trend

"(i) since academic interests had been awoken in college* there was a natural desire to perpetuate them.

(ii) Some of those who wished to become teachers and adult educators said that the course had strengthened their appreciation of the value of education.

(iii) Growing confidence in the ability to do research.

(iv) Interest in work where intellectual effort could be furthered."[17]

The latter was a very important consideration, according to Blumler.

Asked whether they would be working in their present occupation in 1957 had they not done the Ruskin course 75% thought it "rather" or "very unlikely"; [illegible]% accepting it as "very unlikely". 54 mobile students claimed their Ruskin experience helped them occupationally in four main ways:

1. by providing information useful in the job;
2. by developing skills useful in the job;
3. by facilitating examination of problems in broader perspective; and
4. by enhancing self-confidence.

Those who mentioned skills did so in two main ways -

- ability to express oneself more adequately in writing and orally, i.e. report-writing and discussion;

- ability to examine problems in a systematic and disciplined way.

By 3 above was meant improved ability to take a greater number of factors into account, particularly factors they would not have assessed properly before

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* As measured by the 31% who said that the "course awakened interest in academic study". [18]

due to limitations of background, mental habits and ideological orientation.

On the other hand, favourite leisure time activities appear not to be affected. The order of preference for different types of activity and the percentage of those pursuing them do not alter between the period before college and 1957. Changes which do occur can be accounted for almost solely by age. However, many felt that the course facilitated the pursuit of old interests by creating a more 'academic' approach to old interests. Again, as with the ability to discharge responsibility in employment, one of the main effects of the course in regard to leisure activities is to remove feelings of inferiority. Incidentally, in this context also many appreciated the experience of part-time courses, courses they had pursued before coming to Ruskin.

We have seen how the course interacts with the intellectual/cultural component. How does it affect the other two? In the case of the vocational/instrumental component the effect of a two-year course is clear enough: the eyes of Ruskin students open to the dazzling prospect of university entrance. This prospect is present from the very start for Magee students, and we can only assume that for some it fades as the year progresses. The question which then arises is whether the Derry course <u>really</u> promises anything besides university entrance. And, if this is the case, it poses the question of its appropriateness for those who cannot make the grade. The same cut and dried dilemma has apparently been obviated by Ruskin, who can, it seems, offer a two-year diploma course as an end in itself with far greater conviction.

A year is probably too short a period in which to witness a change in the 'social and personal relevance' dimension (see page 7). We would need to follow up students two to three years after they have completed the course. We can, however, look at the Ruskin example for indicators. Recall that the demands for a job include freedom of expression, a degree of autonomy and the service of others. Insofar as the course increased the perceived value of the intellectual approach it might, very tentatively, be predicted that the first two of three job qualities are enhanced at the expense of the third. Bearing on this were the reasons given for satisfaction in current employment by 103 mobile ex-students:

	%
- extent and importance of the responsibilities	49
- approval of the purpose of the work	49
- varied tasks	34
- relatively intellectual nature of the work	33
- opportunities for meeting and dealing with people	23
- good material conditions	17
- independence and comparative freedom from supervisor	14
- dealing with children and young people	10*

* The Centers' question which tapped three qualities of particular significance in the job milieu had seemed to me rather artificial, given its

Freedom of expression and relative autonomy smack of personal desiderata for the enjoyment of a job. Yet, from the above, it appears as if there is a 'Social Relevance' dimension, per se, measured by a sense of one's importance to the operation, and, peculiarly but critically, an acceptance that the job is worth doing.[19] Up until now it has seemed to us that such a dimension was being tapped by service to others, a factor in the 'ideal' job which drops several places in importance when the reality is encountered. Or rather, it seems, is the contribution of this to the psychological well-being of the worker usurped by more intellectual attractions. We could argue that the job fails to provide an outlet for the need to be of service to others, and, therefore, that the worker turns to other - intellectual - attributes for both satisfaction and justification. On the other hand, we could say that the factor was always weak in the matrix of desiderata. The reality lies probably along these lines, but is no less interesting for all that.

In our reckoning the notion of service to others, while genuinely present, is a smokescreen for impulses and ideas which the student has not yet satisfactorily resolved. The desire - the ambition - to continue with his or her education, and, hopefully, to enter university leads to much soul-searching as to the appropriateness of ambition. It also leads to anxiety and a sense of fleeing from reality: they are surrounded by unemployment and the determined rush for material advance. In the midst of all this stands the student experiencing the need for a greater personal involvement in the activities of society. Justification for the existence of this often vague and, apparently, selfish motivation is then sought in the 'practical results' of further education: a formal qualification, university entrance, and so forth. The devil of ambition and the pursuit of intellectual interests is finally exorcised by the notion of service to others. It is this role of reconcilement which is taken over on a genuine basis when the student finds in his or her job a feeling of importance and approval of the job's purpose. Significantly Blumler puts the issue thus:

> "Although Ruskin experience rarely implants a new interest in finding more responsible employment, it probably helps many students to feel that their ambitions are appropriate".[20]

The desire to serve others, whatever its source or function in the psychology of justification, is nevertheless present and mixes as a genuine ingredient with intellectual and instrumental elements. Yet, however strongly it is experienced by Ruskin or Derry students there can be little doubt that it is weakened in the post-educational social and occupational milieu. Despite Blumler's claim that an analysis of 70 interviews showed the majority (no figure is given) "were pleased with the opportunities for serving others that their new job provided"[21] such opportunities are ranked fifth in order of importance, and by only 23% of the sample (see above). Furthermore, there are indications from a less direct source that the overall effect of the course is in the direction of a more intellectual, less involved attitude to society.

Our evidence comes from an examination of trade union activity among

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Lack of context and concomitant encouragement to people to dream about the ideal job. Yet it now seems that these qualities are actually sought for and attained by some, e.g. varied tasks, independence, dealing with children and young people.

Ruskin students before and after college. According to Blumler a "crucial assumption" on which the philosophy of the college is based states that "a liberal and academic education in the social sciences would not only stimulate the personal development of gifted working students, but could and would be translated by them into the provision of more effective service to the Labour Movement as a whole".[22] In at least one respect this has not proved to be the case. A considerable 88% of 5 years of students were members of or officers in trade unions prior to entry. In 1957 while this figure had only dropped by 3% the number of officers had fallen from 63% at entry to 34% in 1957.

Examination of after-college careers shows clearly that almost all of the decline in trade union activity occurs among those who attain upward occupational mobility outside of the labour movement; these constituted 60% of the sample in question. It is also necessary to point out that of the remaining occupational groupings it is only among those who became full-time TU officers that TU activity increased. Among the two remaining categories the number of those increasing their activity is evenly balanced by those for whom such activity decreased.

Incidentally, Blumler bends over backwards "to justify the formulation of a more decisive judgement", (namely) "that the college course itself does not undermine the basic TU loyalties of many students".[23] Yet a few pages later he concludes that "in qualifying (the upwardly mobile) for high status appointments in new fields, the course is indirectly responsible for the loss of many students to their former unions and for a decline in their voluntary TU activities".[24]

5. CONCLUSIONS

We have considered here the components of the motivation which prompts mature people to take up a full-time - residential for some - course in further education, leading for most to university entrance. In line with the findings of Blumler in the case of Ruskin College, Oxford, we have detected three, relatively independent, components among the many reasons cited for application to the course:

- a vocational or instrumental component, expressed as a desire for a formal qualification, and university entrance;
- a social relevance component, expressed as a desire for a job which was both satisfying and served others; and
- an intellectual/cultural component, expressed as a desire to complete education, to do some serious study and to regain or build self-confidence.

These components are not, nor need they be, definitively distinct elements of pre-course expectations and motivation, the sort of elements often believed to be discovered by more 'objective' methods such as factor analysis. If anything they are analytic components, distinctive shadings which give to the

obscure dynanism of human ambition perspective and colour. They have labels which may be changed, properties which may belong somewhere else, as the interpretative need arises. Furthermore, we have considered the effects of the course on these components, Ignoring for the moment reasons for the expectation that changes should and do occur, we have argued that the intellectual component is both the need to flex academic muscles and to find justification for the practical steps and choices that this involves, by seeking confirmation of the value of this ambition in the experience of academic success, firstly, on the course itself, and secondly, in after-college academic and occupational performance. The chief value of both the Derry and Ruskin courses seems to be the removal of feelings of intellectual inferiority by the inculcation of academic skills rather than by the implanting of subject interest. The need to apply the knowledge gained seems to out-weigh the kind of theoretical considerations and pursuits which love for a subject would imply. Funnily enough, students may well overlook the extent to which they may have acquired a liking for a subject area.

It is the combination of vocational and intellectual components which gives the experience its pragmatic aspect. It is probably this component which whithers the delicate leaf of service to others which hovers about all instrumental considerations both before and during the course, and, which finally becomes submerged the more the pursuit of intellectual achievement is given its head.

It follows, as a hypothesis, from this interpretation that the interaction between reasons for doing the course and the experience of the course, and its relevance is primarily one-way. Changes in reasons will lead to changes in experience much more dramatically than the reverse. Principally, this is because students have thought about why they want to do the course and have coalesced their reasons with the course's impact on future plans. If a man wants to do the course in order to take up some particular career, the knowledge that that career may not be open to him significantly alters his experience of the course: he cannot operate in a justificatory vacuum. The same would not be true of the young undergraduate who may not have had to articulate his reasons for going to university, and for whom knowledge of negative possibilities in the job market does not create a crisis of conscience.

It also follows from this that students' backgrounds and their reasons for doing the course cannot easily be, and it is doubtful if they ever have been, translated into more appropriate curriculum objectives. My own experience of the Magee Foundation Course inclines me to belive that curriculum considerations derive their shape and structure from long-standing philosophical stances and institutional constraints and in this respect are far less adaptive to the needs of students. On the contrary, students must be in a position to adapt to them- a kind of principled inertia makes traffic flow the other way well-nigh impossible.

To make the point more starkly: student needs may be met by alterations in some of the structure - shifting emphasis on teaching skills, study

procedures and so forth. The internal core of the curriculum, however, its content and organization, owes its specific shape to almost every other factor of direct or indirect relevance but these needs and demands. This, I surmise, is the reality. It is far less clear whether the situation should be otherwise.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This distinction which has had considerable, and, perhaps, over-rated influence on perceptions of the validity and relevance of the research function in education was made by M. Scriven. One source of the influential 'The methodology of Evaluation" is the volume Perspectives of Curriculum Evaluation, published by Rand McNally, 1967. See Section 4, pp 49-51.

2. Walter Vrooman, in "The Story of Ruskin College, 1899-1949" (Oxford 1949); quoted in K. Rowe: "The Development and Changing Roles of the Adult Residential Colleges in Britain" (1970, p. 77; unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Keele).

3. K. Rowe, op. cit., p. 70.

4. For example, "adult Education", and "Studies in Adult Education" both published by the National Institute of Adult Education, the latter under the aegis of the University of Leeds.

5. A. H. Charnley: Research in Adult Education in the British Isles (NIAE, 1974).

   T. Kelly: A Select Bibliography of Adult Education (NIAE, 1974).

6. J. Blumler: "The Effects of long-term Residential Adult Education in Post-war Britain, with particular reference to Ruskin College, Oxford" (1962, p. 10; unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford).

7. Walter Vrooman, quoted in Blumler, op. cit., p.203, fn. 1.

8. Blumler, op. cit., p. 44.

9. ibid., p. 93.

10. The Schedule in which this question appears is reprinted in an appendix to Centers' The Psychology of Social Classes (Princeton University Press, 1949).

11. Students who were given the Blumler question at Christmas (1978) will now be administered the Center's original, after Easter (1979), to see if they respond differently.

12. Centers, op. cit. Table 20, p. 86.

13. Blumler, op. cit., p. 114.

14. ibid., p. 133.

15. ibid., p. 134-135.

16. ibid., p. 390 (?)

17. ibid., p. 147.

18. ibid., p. 134, Table 32.

19. It is interesting to note that the need to justify activities to oneself and others and to feel comfortable in this justification form a corner-stone in the theory of cognitive dissonance, the raison d'etre of much social-psychology in the '40s and '50s. See, for example, Lindzey and Aronson's 'The Handbook of Social Psychology, Vol. 3.

20. Blumler, op. cit., p. 148.

21. ibid., p. 177.

22. ibid., p. 202.

23. ibid., p. 236.

24. ibid., p. 254.